

Message Text

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47

ACTION EA-10

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FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5883

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

UNCLAS SYDNEY 2353

WELLINGTON PASS TO MR. LAIRD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP, AS (LAIRD, MELVIN)

SUBJ: PRESS COMMENT TO MELVIN LAIRD SPEECH

1. FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, MELVIN LAIRD, NOW SENIOR COUNCILOR FOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS WITH READER'S DIGEST, VISITED SYDNEY NOVEMBER 3 TO 6 AS GUEST OF READER'S DIGEST AUSTRALIA. IN ADDITION TO MEETINGS WITH READER'S DIGEST OFFICIALS AND EVENING RECEPTION GIVEN BY READER'S DIGEST, LAIRD GAVE AN ADDRESS TO AN AUDIENCE OF SOME 400 HOSTED BY THE INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS OF AUSTRALIA. THE ADDRESS WAS EXCEEDINGLY WELL RECEIVED, SOME OF THE AUDITORS COMMENTING ON LAIRD'S SPONTANEITY AND SIMPLICITY OF STYLE, AS WELL AS THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS TALK.

2. BOTH THE "SYDNEY MORNING HERALD" AND "THE AUSTRALIAN" COVERED LAIRD'S NOVEMBER 5 ADDRESS. IN HIS TALK LAIRD REVIEWED RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN U.S. DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES,

DEMONSTRATING THAT CONTRARY TO SOME STORIES, THE U.S. HAS NOT REPEAT NOT BEEN STANDING STILL DURING THE LAST 18 MONTHS OF WATERGATE. ON THE CONTRARY, THE U.S. HAS BEEN GOING THROUGH UNCLASSIFIED

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A GREAT CREATIVE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD. LAIRD TOUCHED

ON REVENUE SHARING PROGRAMS, DECENTRALIZATION FROM FEDERAL TO STATE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES, SPURT OF AGRICULTURE FROM ECONOMICS OF SCARCITY TO ABUNDANCE, U.S. INITIATIVES IN MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF ENERGY POSED BY THE ARAB INCREASE IN OIL PRICES, U.S. INITIATIVES IN NEGOTIATING WITH USSR ON SALT AND MBFR, AS OPPOSED TO UNILATERAL DISARMAMENT, AND U.S. CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR AND RELIANCE ON ITS MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL ALLIANCES.

3. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE ANTI-LABOR GOVERNMENT "SYDNEY MORNING HERALD," HEADLINED "LAIRD ATTACKS CENTRALISM IN GOVERNMENT". ARTICLE QUOTED LAIRD AT LENGTH: "WE ARE TAKING THE DECISIONS AWAY FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND GIVING THE POWER OF DECISION MAKING TO STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, ETC." WHILE THE "HERALD" DID NOT RELATE THIS POINT TO THE AUSTRALIAN SCENE, IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING IF LATER SOME EDITORIAL OR COMMENTATOR WOULD POINT OUT THE CONTRAST WITH THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR GOVERNMENT'S STRONG TENDENCY TOWARD CENTRALIZATION.

4. "THE AUSTRALIAN" NEWSPAPER HEADLINED "ARAB STAND ON OIL GOOD FOR THE WEST - LAIRD", AND EMPHASIZED LAIRD'S POINT THAT TEN YEARS HENCE, "WE WILL THANK THE ARAB NATIONS FOR BRINGING THE ATTENTIONS OF THE FREE GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD TO THE NEED TO RESEARCH AND CONSERVE ENERGY RESOURCES."

5. POLITICAL COMMENTATOR, ROBERT DUFFIELD, IN "THE AUSTRALIAN" SOUGHT TO ANALYZE LAIRD'S OWN PERSONAL FUTURE PLANS AND CONCLUDED THAT, "MR. LAIRD DOES NOT COVET THE JOB OF EITHER ROCKEFELLER OR KISSINGER, BUT IF KISSINGER'S CAREER SHOULD COLLAPSE IN A MIDDLE EAST MAELSTROM, OR IF CONGRESS SHOULD REFUSE TO CONFIRM ROCKFELLER, MR. LAIRD WOULD FULFILL HIS DUTY TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC. MEANWHILE HE CAN WELL AFFORD TO PLAY THE ROLE OF LAIRD IN WAITING."
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